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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 35th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. MURPHY (Ireland)
(Vice-Chairman)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 96: ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (continued)

(d) PROTECTION OF GLOBAL CLIMATE FOR PRESENT AND FUTURE GENERATIONS OF MANKIND (continued) (A/50/536, A/50/716)

(e) IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OUTCOME OF THE GLOBAL CONFERENCE ON THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES (continued) (A/50/422 and Add.1)

1. Mr. Ha-Yong MOON (Republic of Korea) welcomed the progress achieved at the first session of the Conference of the parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and hoped that, in view of the critical importance of the matter, the negotiations on the Berlin Mandate would be completed at the earliest stage possible in 1997. It was equally crucial for the parties to the Convention to set the goals and timetable for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions beyond the year 2000 and to give due consideration to the principle of common but different responsibilities of States in that regard. Meanwhile, the parties to the Convention, particularly those countries identified in annex I, should fulfil their obligations under the Convention, in particular article 4, subparagraphs 2 (a) and (b).

2. Stressing the importance of technology and its transfer in combating and preventing environmental degradation and further global warming, he welcomed the climate technology initiative of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and expressed the hope that tangible and effective measures would be taken for its implementation. The international community, particularly developed countries and international organizations, must fulfil the commitments with respect to the transfer of environmentally sound technology undertaken under Agenda 21 and assist the developing countries in building their national capacities in the areas of science and technology.

3. With respect to the implementation of the outcome of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, the United Nations should increase the scope of its activities concerning some components of the Programme of Action such as biodiversity resources, national institutions and administrative capacity-building. Given the uniqueness and fragility of the natural, social and economic conditions of small island States, the international community must urgently provide them with new and additional resources for their sustainable development. It should also conduct a comprehensive review of actions taken at the national, subregional, regional and international levels in order to identify the problems and obstacles to the implementation of the Programme of Action. In that regard, the Secretary-General should prepare a progress report on the implementation of the Programme of Action at all levels.

4. Mr. ELDEEB (Egypt) said that attention should be focused on implementing the agreed programmes to limit environmental pollution and climate change; that would require the provision of financial resources and the transfer of environmentally sound technology. A firm linkage between climate change and

economic development was also necessary in view of the adverse effects of climate change suffered by the developing countries. He looked forward to the next Conference of the Parties, which would address the matter of devising practical solutions to the problems produced by climate change. He also hoped that it would examine the difficulties which continued to obstruct achievement of the objectives of the Framework Convention, as well as implementation of the programmes needed to limit the adverse effects of climate change. It should also take into consideration new developments. One approach might be to supplement the Convention with an additional protocol, albeit on the understanding that the developing countries should not be encumbered by any further commitments as a result.

5. Efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions should focus on the urban transport, communications and energy sectors, and particular attention should be devoted to environmental policies and programmes in the developing countries with a view to improving and developing sustainable transport and communications systems, bearing in mind the respective social, economic and environmental requirements of those countries. To that end, the appropriate technology should be transferred from the developed countries.

6. Egypt had fulfilled its undertakings to the Global Environment Facility (GEF), which, underresourced as it was, would be unable to achieve its assigned objectives unless it received more support. He none the less urged it to devote attention to projects being implemented by Egypt to deal with the effects of climate change, particularly in connection with its dwindling water resources and threatened agricultural land in the northern Delta and Sinai. In that context, however, his Government required greater support from international partners, notably in the implementation of projects relating to enabling activities in those two regions. Meanwhile, it had introduced specific measures for acquiring additional funds and had also adopted ambitious programmes to improve energy use and reduce waste.

7. The next Conference of the Parties should therefore review the fulfilment of commitments under the Convention, as well as the remaining obstacles to be overcome. It should also adopt implementation programmes within the framework of an effective international partnership, with each partner shouldering its commitments to tackle the adverse effects of climate change created and aggravated by the industrial revolution and non-sustainable production and consumption patterns. In conclusion, since natural resources were the prime income source in developing countries, he hoped that concerted efforts would be channelled into addressing the needs of those countries, in particular the small island developing States.

8. Mr. KARIYAWASAM (Sri Lanka) said that action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions would have to be based not only on scientific and economic criteria but also on political and social sensitivities and practical necessities. Since the extent to which most developing countries implemented their commitments under the Convention depended on assistance received in the transfer of technologies, capacity-building and implementation of sustainable development programmes, it was imperative to enhance and replenish the resources available through the Global Environment Facility on a regular basis. In that regard, the

option of establishing a separate financial mechanism for the Convention should not be dismissed prematurely.

9. His delegation believed that the international community should take strong and concerted action against terrorist groups which focused on economic targets with the potential to create environmental hazards, since such environmental damage could have global repercussions.

10. Mr. LANGLEY (New Zealand) said that his delegation welcomed the outcomes of the First Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change, and in particular the establishment of the Berlin Mandate working group. New Zealand would continue to support the development of practical, flexible and equitable measures to enable the international community to achieve the Convention's objective of stabilizing greenhouse gas concentrations at levels that would prevent dangerous human interference with the climate system.

11. Turning to the issue of small island developing States, he said that it was important to maintain the momentum and resolve which had been established at the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. In that regard, he welcomed the establishment of the Small Island Developing States Unit within the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development and supported the maintenance of a critical mass to ensure that the Unit carried out its important functions in support of the implementation of the Programme of Action.

12. States should be mindful that strengthening the capacity of organs, commissions and other bodies of the United Nations system to implement the Programme of Action would entail a change of attitudes and priorities as well as improved efficiency and effectiveness. A larger and more expensive international infrastructure did not necessarily strengthen capacity.

13. His delegation supported the approach to the implementation of the Small Island Developing States Information Network (SIDS/NET) and Small Island Developing States Technical Assistance Programme (SIDS/TAP), proposed in the Secretary-General's report. Noting the references in the report to the valuable contribution made by regional bodies, he said that New Zealand was committed to ensuring that the South Pacific Forum and the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme continued to play a vital role in the South Pacific region.

14. Mr. DJABBARY (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that unsustainable patterns of production and consumption, particularly in developed countries, continued to be the main cause of the degradation of the environment; responsibility for combating that degradation rested mainly with those countries. The tendency to impose unrealistic standards and requirements on the industries and products of developing countries and to propose or adopt financial policies which were detrimental to those countries' economic and social development, under the pretext of environmental protection, was therefore inconsistent with the spirit and provisions of environmental agreements, including the Framework Convention on Climate Change. The chances of achieving the objectives of the Convention would remain slim as long as the parties to annex I to the Convention failed to meet their commitments in a comprehensive manner which took fully into account the social and economic aspects of climate change.

15. While stressing the crucial importance of controlling greenhouse gases, he noted that setting reduction objectives without taking into account the possible negative economic impact on developing countries to which the Convention gave special attention could not be regarded as a comprehensive approach for the implementation of the Convention. It would be unfair and also inconsistent with the provisions of the Convention to ask developing countries to bear heavy economic losses resulting from the implementation of proposed measures when they were already suffering from degradation of their environments due to the actions of others.

16. Ms. PLAISTEAD (United States of America) noting that a variety of important conventions and mechanisms had been adopted for the protection of the resources of small island developing countries, said that cooperation could also be achieved in the absence of agreement. For instance, the call for a coral reef initiative put forward by her delegation at the Global Conference on Small Island Developing States had been taken up by Governments of Pacific countries and had resulted in a call to action and a framework for action in support of the International Coral Reef Initiative. Those two documents had provided a starting-point for six regional coral reef workshops which would define and address regional needs and priorities, as well as catalyse the development of national coral reef initiatives. The results of those workshops would be shared with the Commission on Sustainable Development.

17. The recently approved GEF operational strategy had recognized the special situation of small island developing States and identified actions which would fall within the purview of GEF.

18. Her Government was collaborating with others to develop an international management initiative for the Queen conch, a species which was on the verge of extinction as a result of overfishing and habitat destruction. She hoped to see a cooperative mechanism developed which would permit the recovery and sustainable development of that coral reef fishery throughout the Caribbean Sea region.

19. At the recent conference of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) hosted by her Government, practical solutions had been sought to the difficult issues raised by land-based sources of pollution and degradation of the coastal environment and a programme of action had been established which reflected those concerns. Her Government wanted to work together with the Governments of the small island developing States on key concerns such as biodiversity, habitat protection, integrated coastal management and the exchange of information and would continue to follow up on both programmes of action through bilateral programmes, the World Bank, GEF, the regional development banks and other multilateral assistance agencies. Moreover, the United States would continue to promote policies and procedures that encouraged sustainable development and would continue to support innovative and alternative methods, such as reform of regional development banks and increased opportunities for micro-enterprise financing. Her Government had supported the regional mechanisms called for in the programme of action adopted at the Global Conference and had provided necessary assistance to the South Pacific region for such a mechanism.

20. The high incidence of natural disasters in the Caribbean in the previous year had demonstrated once again the vulnerability of small island developing States and the United States had accordingly taken action to assist by adding to the early warning capabilities in both the Caribbean and Pacific regions.

AGENDA ITEM 95: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION (continued)

(f) WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT (A/50/399)

(g) HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT (A/50/330 and Corr.1)

(h) BUSINESS AND DEVELOPMENT (A/50/417)

(i) INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION FOR THE ERADICATION OF POVERTY IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES (A/50/215-S/1995/475, A/50/396, A/50/551)

(j) UNITED NATIONS INITIATIVE ON OPPORTUNITY AND PARTICIPATION (A/50/501)

(k) FOOD AND SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT (A/C.2/50/8)

21. Mr. DESAI (Under-Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on international cooperation for the eradication of poverty in developing countries (A/50/396), said that it focused principally on the issue of coordination within the United Nations system for the eradication of poverty, particularly as it related to the formulation of integrated policies in the follow-up to recent major global conferences and to the delivery of assistance to the poor at the country level. The report classified the activities of the United Nations system into eight broad categories: analytical work, income-generating activities, labour-intensive public works, access to basic services, social funds and safety nets, participation of the poor, targeted efforts towards reducing discrimination and monitoring of poverty changes.

22. It was at the country level that the extent to which efforts to eradicate poverty had been successful must be measured. A number of instruments were in place at the country level to facilitate the coordination of the work of the United Nations system in that area. Considerable effort was being made to involve non-governmental organizations, community-based organizations and the poor themselves in a decentralized approach which was intended to take decisions and resources to the grass-roots level.

23. The problem of poverty raised a number of common issues across countries, regions and sectors which called for coordination at the inter-agency level. The agencies recognized the desirability of common approaches to poverty assessment, data collection and evaluation, coherence and consistency between macroeconomic and social policies, the feminization of poverty and popular participation in the formulation of poverty eradication programmes. Recognizing the need for strong inter-agency support for action at the country level, the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) had recently decided to establish three inter-agency task forces to follow up the cross-cutting themes at recent global conferences, all of which were closely related to poverty eradication.

24. Introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the draft programme for the observance of the International year for the Eradication of Poverty (1996) (A/50/551), he said that the Year would provide an occasion to raise public awareness, mobilize resources, galvanize action at all levels and set in place the institutional arrangements for the effort to create societies free of poverty through action at the national level and with appropriate international support. He drew particular attention to the objectives, principles and theme for the Year set out in paragraphs 11-14 of the document. The Year provided an opportunity for a more focused, comprehensive and cohesive system-wide effort.

25. Document A/50/417, which contained the report of the Secretary-General on entrepreneurship and privatization for economic growth and sustainable development, was based on inputs from more than 20 organizations of the United Nations system. The report showed that the system played an important role in assisting Governments to develop national capacities to promote entrepreneurship, to design and implement privatization policies and to create enabling environments - which included the provision of an adequate social and economic infrastructure - to permit the harnessing of market forces. Assistance for the development of small enterprises and for women entrepreneurs in urban and rural areas was designed to enhance the status of women and to help reduce poverty. He gave a number of examples of successful coordination of relevant activities in the United Nations system.

26. Turning to document A/50/501, which contained the report of the United Nations Panel on Opportunity and Participation, he said that a substantial part of the report dealt with the promotion of micro-enterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises. It provided specific examples of successful policy initiatives in areas ranging from access to credit and training in entrepreneurial skills to land tenure and regulatory questions, and drew attention to the particular obstacles faced by women entrepreneurs. The report also discussed the importance of an adequate enabling environment at the national and international levels. The Panel hoped that its analysis would be viewed as a first step towards the implementation of the Programme of Action adopted at the World Summit for Social Development. He expressed his deep appreciation for the financial support provided for the work of the Panel by the Governments of Papua New Guinea and the Federated States of Micronesia.

27. Introducing the Secretary-General's report on effective mobilization and integration of women in development: gender issues in macroeconomic policy-making and development planning (A/50/399), he noted that previously unavailable statistics, published in 1991 and 1995, had shown that there were significant and measurable gender differences in key economic indicators. Those statistics permitted a comparison of the situations of women and men in 1970, 1980 and 1990 and for the first time permitted the extrapolation of trends. The statistics, together with other information from organizations of the United Nations system, showed that women were increasingly significant economic actors in the global economy and confirmed that certain economic policies and development strategies had the potential to liberate and strengthen women's skills and contributions whereas others intensified the conditions which prevented that from happening. The report indicated that unless economic trends were analysed from a gender perspective and unless national and international economic policies were formulated taking into account, inter alia, differences

between women and men in terms of opportunities, preferences and outcomes, many of those policies would be ineffective from the outset.

28. Mr. LAWRENCE (United Nations Development Programme), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on developing human resources for development (A/50/330), recalled that it had been prepared in response to General Assembly resolution 48/205, which emphasized the importance of coordinated, cross-sectoral and integrated approaches, covering various dimensions of public policy, such as health, housing, communications, education and training, science and technology and employment. Each of those dimensions, if well-coordinated and sensitive to changing needs, could contribute its part within a collectively supported enabling environment for broader social development, as called for in Chapter I of the Programme of Action adopted at the World Summit for Social Development.

29. Earlier approaches to human resources development had gradually given way to more gender-sensitive, decentralized and participatory frameworks which sought to foster human resourcefulness through support of public policy and services across many sectors. In many of the less developed countries, structural adjustment, downsizing of public sectors and sluggish growth had exacerbated pressures on human resources development delivery systems. The report therefore defined human resources development, from a public policy perspective, in terms of mutually beneficial strategies for empowering people by fostering the contributory capacities that they could bring to the improvement of their own quality of life and that of others in their families, communities, enterprises and societies. Human resources development thus was a major factor in poverty prevention as a cross-cutting theme dealt with at recent major global conferences.

30. The report reviewed current problems which Governments faced in meeting their countries' human resources needs. Bearing in mind in particular the Declaration and Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development, the report presented factors which both constrained and enhanced the trend towards more integrated human resources development approaches. The bulk of the report documented examples of the support given by the United Nations system and focused explicitly on intersectoral applications at the regional and country levels. It also provided a review of the implications for human resources development strategies of the Copenhagen commitments to social development, and an overview of conclusions, with recommendations for consideration by the General Assembly.

31. Ms. MENENDEZ (Spain), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that it was essential to combat poverty if sustainable development was to be achieved. Some 70 per cent of people living in poverty were women and the feminization of poverty was increasing disproportionately. It was therefore essential to implement macroeconomic policies and development strategies that fully integrated the gender perspective. The World Summit for Social Development had reaffirmed the importance of a comprehensive approach to poverty and the need for integrated and multidimensional strategies for poverty eradication. The empowerment of people, and of women in particular, must be a central component of such strategies.

32. Governments bore the primary responsibility for formulating appropriate strategies, policies, programmes and actions to combat poverty; the effort required sound macroeconomic policies, structural changes and the mobilization of domestic resources, inter alia, through more equitable tax regimes and a reduction in military expenditures. In developing countries, an active private sector, including the informal sector - whose linkages with the formal sector should be strengthened - and small and medium-sized enterprises provided the principal means to generate productive employment. The State should create an enabling environment for the development of the private sector and should implement active social policies. Funding for basic social services should be increased. In that connection, the 20/20 initiative contained in the Copenhagen Programme of Action could prove valuable. Poverty eradication strategies also required a participatory approach to development and respect for human rights. Specific measures were needed to address the impact of poverty on women and children.

33. The report of the Secretary-General on developing human resources for development (A/50/330) contained very useful recommendations with regard to the need for an integrated approach to the subject, which was crucial for combating poverty. It was imperative to ensure full and equal access to education for girls and women.

34. International cooperation and assistance were crucial, in particular for the poorest countries and the most vulnerable sectors of society. The States members of the European Union reaffirmed their commitment to provide 0.7 per cent of their gross national product for official development assistance. She took note of the fact that the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank and the International Labour Organization recognized the importance of devoting priority to poverty eradication. However, system-wide coordination often was lacking and the United Nations had found it difficult to develop an integrated approach to the multidimensional aspects of poverty and to reach women, who were particularly affected. The Copenhagen Programme of Action provided an opportunity for the United Nations development system to attain that objective. The Commission for Social Development should play a central role in assisting the Economic and Social Council with its coordinating functions. She welcomed the recent decision by ACC to establish three task forces to follow up on recent global conferences. At the field level, the resident coordinator system, the country strategy note and the programme approach could play a key role in coordinating efforts to combat poverty. The International Year for the Eradication of Poverty (1996) should be an occasion for the expeditious and effective implementation at the national and international levels of the provisions of the Copenhagen Programme of Action, in particular those relating to poverty eradication.

35. Turning to the question of business and development, she underscored the importance of the partnership between the public and the private sectors. Governments should contribute by creating an enabling environment for the private sector. Institutions representing private enterprises, such as federations, chambers and associations, had a major role to play. Public enterprises should be managed the way businesses were. The United Nations system could contribute by providing technical assistance for the development of national capacities to promote entrepreneurship, through the design and

implementation of privatization policies and by disseminating data and information on relevant successful undertakings. The delegations on whose behalf she was speaking welcomed the fact that at its ninth session the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) would discuss the relationship between business and development with a view to strengthening the contributions of the United Nations system in that area.

36. Turning to the question of women in development, she said that the Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women represented a major step forward for the advancement of women. She also welcomed the comprehensive Human Development Report for 1995, which focused on women in development and had provided valuable input to the Beijing Conference. There was a consensus, embodied in the Platform for Action, that women's full participation in all spheres of economic and social life was of fundamental importance for sustainable development.

37. The number of women employed outside the home was increasing throughout the world, although more slowly in developing countries. The Platform for Action pointed out the need to adopt macroeconomic policies and development strategies which addressed the issue of women and poverty. The European Union attached great importance to the advancement of women in the economic field, inter alia, by ensuring them access to resources, employment, income-generating activities, markets and trade. All forms of employment discrimination based on gender must be eliminated.

38. Insufficient attention to gender analysis had meant that the contributions and concerns of women were too often ignored. Special attention should be paid to the plight of women in rural areas. Unless policy formulation took the gender perspective into account, significant economic inefficiency and resource misallocations were likely to persist, which in turn would result in decreased economic growth, and the increased feminization of poverty. Public policies and public expenditure should promote gender equality.

39. In that context it was essential to ensure that women had equal rights and access to economic resources and savings. Political and legal measures were needed to ensure access for women to credit through established financial services, credit institutions and commercial banks. Unreasonable collateral requirements and high transaction costs, which acted as barriers, should be reviewed in order to enable women to obtain credit. Strategies aimed at promoting sustainable and productive entrepreneurial activities for income generation among disadvantaged women and women living in poverty should be developed. Legal frameworks should be modified in order to equalize opportunities and ensure women's access to and ownership of land and property. Girls and women should have access to education and vocational training throughout their lives. Education training and retraining programmes for women should be developed and implemented to enable them to attain skills to meet the needs of a changing socio-economic context with a view to improving their employment opportunities.

40. In order to obtain a coherent approach by the United Nations system in its support for income-generating activities for women, in particular credit schemes, the European Union urged the inter-agency mechanisms to give priority

to the development of common guidelines and strategies for those activities. The United Nations Development Fund for Women would have a key role to play within the United Nations system in promoting the full participation of women in sustainable development. However, final decisions regarding the nature of that role should not be taken until the results of the independent evaluation commissioned by the Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Population Fund were known. In all processes of follow-up to conferences, the issue of women in development should be addressed by the Economic and Social Council and its subsidiary bodies. It was to be hoped that the Committee would give more attention to women's issues in the future and would cooperate in that regard with the Third Committee. Women should participate fully and on an equal basis in decision-making processes in all avenues of life, including the economic field.

41. Mr. BIAOU (Benin), speaking on sub-item 95 (i), said that the activities to mark the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty had not only contributed to sensitizing public opinion and policy-makers but, above all, had allowed people living in poverty to participate in events and had given them hope.

42. With respect to the draft programme for the observance of the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty, his delegation supported the proposals contained in paragraphs 13 and 14 of document A/50/551. In order to achieve a certain balance in the draft programme, another two subsections should be added dealing with activities at the regional and subregional level and at the international level respectively. Bearing in mind that Africa was the continent most severely affected by all forms of poverty, he expressed surprise at the fact that, unlike the other regional commissions, the Economic Commission for Africa had not proposed any activities for the Year. He hoped that that would be remedied before publication of the final programme of activities.

43. The report on international cooperation for the eradication of poverty in developing countries (A/50/396) was valuable overall and responded generally to resolution 48/184 of 21 December 1993; however it lacked details on specific actions undertaken by United Nations bodies with respect to the role and needs of women living in poverty or the actions taken to improve social services in deprived urban areas. Similarly, no specific action had apparently been taken to mobilize and redistribute resources with a view to eradicating poverty. He welcomed the initiative taken by the Administrator of UNDP to create a poverty elimination fund which would assist countries in the preparation of national anti-poverty strategies as agreed at the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen. Given the scope and complexity of the problem he called for the establishment, within the Secretariat, of a separate entity responsible for all issues relating to the eradication of poverty.

44. Sir John KAPUTIN (Papua New Guinea), speaking on agenda item 95 (j), he recalled that his country had played an important role in promoting the concept of opportunity and participation which had led to the adoption of General Assembly resolution 48/60 establishing the United Nations Panel on Opportunity and Participation; it had also contributed $100,000 towards the Panel.

45 The fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations should be more than an occasion for celebration; it should positively address a very significant part of the world's population, the often overlooked grass-roots people in developing countries. Empowering people and societies through innovations in technology and human capacity-building was vitally important for equitable and sustainable development. It was also a means of forging a stronger, more genuine and more equitable partnership, overcoming the perpetual dependency created by technological gaps, trade barriers and limited access to financial markets.

46. In Papua New Guinea and the South Pacific region, opportunity and participation had been limited by shortcomings in administrative, economic, legal and other systems which had been inherited, imposed or otherwise imported from the outside. Other difficulties, he acknowledged, were self-inflicted or home-grown. The Panel had rightly drawn attention, in paragraph 25, to the mesoeconomic policies that linked macroeconomic policies to the behaviour of economic agents at the micro-level.

47. The real question at stake was how to transform the recommendations contained in the report into effective reference points for practical guidance to enable people to secure opportunities and broaden their participation in the economic development of their countries. He believed that more could be learned from others, particularly from their experience in developing macroeconomic policy and approaches and techniques to micro-economic management to specific target groups. The regional commissions should draw on the Panel's work and incorporate its ideas into their future work programmes and strategies. The process would naturally filter into national and subsequently into local governments. It was important to go beyond capacity-building and ensure that, once people had secured the capacity, they were provided with opportunities and appropriate support to manage and own investments in such activities as micro-enterprise development. Financing of development projects was crucial. Macroeconomic and financial sector reforms had not succeeded in providing for the credit needs of the bottom 50-70 per cent of the economically active population. He therefore welcomed the World Bank's decision to establish a special loans facility for the poorest of the poor.

48. Although markets were widely regarded as the most effective means of increasing opportunity and participation, experience suggested that markets alone could do little for people without capital or skills of their own. Accordingly, he urged the specialized agencies to address issues such as how to remove obstacles encountered by such persons when seeking loans, in particular the insistence of lenders on collateral, and pointed out that the belief of traditional financial institutions that small loans were unduly costly was not necessarily correct.

49. In view of the dire financial crisis facing the Organization, he would merely suggest that existing bodies, including the Commission on Sustainable Development, should draw upon the report of the Panel in future multi-sectoral approaches on sustainable development. There were a number of issues that the report did not address. Specifically, its recommendations could have gone further and given specific directions to relevant United Nations agencies or outlined possible strategies for implementation. However, he expressed appreciation for the support that the United Nations Initiative on Opportunity

and Participation had received from a cross-section of the world and reaffirmed its relevance to the economic and social development activities of the United Nations system.

50. Mr. FEDORTCHENKO (Russian Federation) said that the report of the Secretary-General on entrepreneurship and privatization for economic growth and sustainable development (A/50/417) was of interest to countries with economies in transition and his delegation supported its conclusions. They should be followed by actual assistance from Governments.

51. Support for national businesses was at the basis of his Government's economic policy. It was engaged in stimulating private enterprise at both the federal and regional levels, and had carried out special programmes in more than 60 regions. In addition, the Government was rapidly creating the necessary infrastructure for entrepreneurship and, in 1995, the number of persons employed in the non-governmental sector had exceeded 10 million. However, the development of private enterprise had not progressed as quickly as anticipated in the areas of production and agriculture. The root of the problem lay in an inadequate flow of investment, including foreign investment, into those sectors and a lack of development of the market infrastructure. The United Nations could take a more active role in promoting international cooperation in that area.

52. He noted with satisfaction the recent decision of the Administrative Committee on Coordination to create three inter-agency task forces in areas closely connected to human resource development. Their major thrust should be to increase opportunities for participation for the most vulnerable groups, promote the development of entrepreneurship and improve the work of the State sector, create social safety nets during the restructuring process and enhance the role of civil society and non-governmental organizations. The international community's awareness of the severity of the social problems occurring in countries with transition economies was reflected in commitment 8 of the Copenhagen Declaration; his delegation hoped that awareness would be followed by an appropriate response.

53. With regard to the eradication of poverty, his delegation supported the conclusions of the Secretary-General's report (A/50/551) and was ready to participate in the observance of 1996 as the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty.

54. Ms. ASHIPALA-MUSAVYI (Namibia), speaking on behalf of the member States of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on women in development (A/50/399) which, while giving a fair analysis on the usage of gender as a variable in economic policy-making and development planning in general, should have brought out more clearly the diverse impact of economic policy-making and development on women, especially in the rural areas.

55. The member States of SADC recognized the significant contribution that women made to economic activity and the major force they represented for change and development in all sectors of the economy. Reintegrating women in development first and foremost meant involving them both in education and

training, involving women in decision-making structures as well as addressing the overall discrimination against them. It also meant empowering women inter alia by providing girls with greater education and training particularly in science and technical subjects.

56. The heavy burden of poverty continued to fall disproportionately on women. Not only did they lack sufficient access to the economic and other resources necessary to improve and sustain their livelihood, but they were prevented from becoming involved in development activities by the legal constraints which treated women as minors. Despite the political will prevailing among Governments, resources for poverty eradication programmes were severely limited due to budgetary constraints. That realization had prompted women in southern Africa both from government and non-governmental organizations to meet in Windhoek, Namibia, in 1994 to determine how they could be active agents as well as beneficiaries of national and regional development. They had adopted action plans calling upon the Governments of southern Africa to create an enabling environment for women's economic participation through policy measures and legal instruments.

57. Education and training opportunities offered to women had in most cases contributed to reinforcing traditional female roles. A major challenge confronting the Governments of the region was how to provide education and training to women to help them to overcome the effects of past discrimination which had often prevented them from acquiring the skills necessary to find employment or be self-employed. Most of the educational systems in the region were being restructured to increase exposure of women and girls to science and technology. She called on the international community to support the efforts of the Governments of southern Africa by providing scholarships to women and girls specifically for science, technical and vocational training.

58. Women constituted the majority of persons engaged in subsistence agriculture which provided food for the majority of the people in the subregion. Yet, they continued to lack equal access and control over land, capital, technology and other means of production. In most countries of the region, women constituted less than 30 per cent of those employed in the formal sector. For many, the informal sector was the only employment alternative. The Governments of the region recognized the urgent need to provide public infrastructure to ensure market access for women and to develop their entrepreneurial skills and would need assistance to meet that challenge. They had adopted national population development policies aimed at eradicating poverty and improving women's health, particularly that of rural women and women with disabilities. Priority was being given to off-farm enterprises that would create income for rural women. SADC member States echoed the call made in the Platform for Action to multilateral donors and regional development banks to review and implement policies to ensure that a higher proportion of resources reached women in rural and remote areas.

59. They also called on the international community to make new and renewable resources available for the implementation of the Platform for Action. A regional workshop would soon be held in southern Africa to work out a follow-up programme for the Platform for Action. She expressed the hope that the international community, the United Nations and the non-governmental

organizations would give their support to make the participation of women a reality in the economic development of the region. She took note of the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women (A/50/744) and said that its recommendations should be considered very seriously.

60. The Division for the Advancement of Women which was the principal entity within the United Nations responsible for gender issues required further strengthening. The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) should be given all the necessary resources to increase options and opportunities for women's economic development in developing countries.

61. Mr. RONNEBERG (Marshall Islands) noted that his Government had received no end of good advice on how to improve its economy. However, when it had been prepared to follow that advice and had requested outside assistance for the implementation of the measures it had been met with silence. The principle of the free market embodied in the World Trade Organization should not simply mean that the developing countries should open their markets to luxury goods from the developed world. Lack of market access granted to developing country products caused by new, non-tariff barriers must be addressed urgently. It would be impossible to develop an entrepreneurial private sector in developing countries if there were no markets where their goods could be sold. His Government was not advocating new barriers to protect its industries, but fair trade and adequate assistance when conditions set by the multilateral financial institutions had been met.

62. Turning to the report of the United Nations Panel on Opportunity and Participation (A/50/501) he said that the section on small enterprises shed much light on the problems faced by entrepreneurs in developing countries. His delegation supported the section on "Insights and Recommendations", and wished to see that report make a substantial contribution to the ongoing work on the agenda for development.

63. Mr. PAWAR (India) said that the many dimensions of poverty were expressed in the form of hunger, illiteracy, lack of education, drinking water, minimum health facilities, shelter and employment opportunities. The essential origins of poverty lay in a lack of income or command over the market, which was linked to the pattern of income distribution in a country. Strategies to conquer that malaise must combine efforts at general economic growth with situation specific approaches. For example, the immediate origin of poverty could be due to an area having poor production potential in terms of resource endowment or to its being inaccessible. Attention should also be given to the needs of those who might have been deprived of benefits for historical reasons. The gender issue was equally important.

64. In India, programmes to guarantee employment to the rural poor and unemployed youth, meet the nutritional, educational and health needs of women and promote their empowerment, and mass literacy programmes were central to the realization of situation-specific strategies. Basic to the success of any strategy and/or programme was the involvement of the people themselves in designing and implementing those programmes in order to generate a sense of ownership.

65. In the light of the commitments entered into for poverty eradication, at the World Summit for Social Development, it was particularly unfortunate, however, that prospects for official development assistance had become uncertain.

66. Mr. WEIRGEN (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)) said that rural women, as producers, providers and caretakers of families, were pivotal agents of food security and sustainable development. Accordingly, their advancement must be promoted in a more systematic and comprehensive manner. Natural resource management and environmental protection, as part of a holistic, inter-disciplinary approach to sustainable development, must reflect the importance of gender. FAO had been actively involved in preparations for the Beijing Conference and was pleased that the strategic objectives of the Platform for Action highlighted women's access to land, improved technologies, support services and markets, while recognizing their indigenous knowledge and contribution to maintaining biodiversity.

67. FAO had extensively revised its own 1989 Plan of Action for Women in Development, placing a sharper focus on rural women in statistics, gender analysis training, policy advice, participatory development, information collection and dissemination, and inter-agency collaboration. In fulfilment of its mandate for poverty eradication, FAO had introduced a special programme on food production in support of food security in low-income food deficit countries. The recent restructuring of FAO had ushered in a new focus on food security and on poverty eradication through the broad-based growth of poor agrarian economies. Detailed and comparative analysis of world poverty in different regions and a database and indicators allowing for its measurement were a part of that strengthened effort, along with the emphasis on the crucial role of rural institutions and civil society. Considering that over 60 per cent of the world's population lived in and derived their livelihood from rural areas, it was difficult to overstate the key role of investment in broadly-based rural growth, dynamic institutional mechanisms and a transformed agrarian base as the three critical elements of genuine and lasting poverty eradication.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.